



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

IPDC THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION

Agenda item for discussion IPDC niche in the wider field of media development

INFORMATION NOTE

SUMMARY CONTENT OF DOCUMENT

This document reflects on the unique role of IPDC and summarizes some of its key contributions to media development, as compared to other media development partners (e.g. NGOs, bilateral cooperation).

IPDC niche in the wider field of media development

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1. BACKGROUND

The International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), which was created in 1980, is the only intergovernmental programme in the UN system mandated to mobilize international support in order to contribute to sustainable development, democracy and good governance by strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries in transition in the field of electronic and print media. Since its creation, IPDC has channeled about US\$ 105 million to over 1,700 media development projects in some 140 countries.

Its unique role has been continuously reaffirmed through resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, including the most recent one *Resolution A/RES/69/96 A-B "Information in the service of humanity"*, adopted on 5 December 2014 at the 69th session of the General Assembly, which urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system and all other stakeholders concerned "to provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media."

2. DESCRIPTION

Stakeholders in the media development field include a myriad of institutions, including NGOs, governments, media associations, academia, civil society groups and the media themselves. Besides IPDC, concrete support to media development has been traditionally provided by individual states and foundations, through multilateral and bilateral aid granted by governments and cooperation agencies, and through partnerships with NGOs and other media-related institutions. Cooperation in this field is also common through professional associations of media professionals and other membership organizations (e.g. associations of broadcasters) for particular capacity-building initiatives, such as participation in conferences or professional networking.

The landscape of those actors who can provide grant support for media development involves a relatively small number of players. Given its multilateral and UN character, IPDC plays a very unique role in the media development field. It provides cooperation modalities that are highly specific to the Programme. IPDC decisions are guided by UN priorities and lines of action that have global consensus, and by UNESCO's particular role therein. IPDC therefore has a specific niche which provides it the unique ability to convene government officials, independent media and other stakeholders across many divides to promote free media and the safety of journalists. The UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which originated in the IPDC three years ago, is a good illustration of what IPDC can uniquely achieve.

In recent years, IPDC has been focusing on small but strategic projects that can make a difference in a particular field and in a given country. The multiplier effect of such initiatives ensures a high impact and the long-term effect of its actions. These points are elaborated below.

3. ANALYSIS

The following seven points capture the niche of IPDC in the wider field of media development:

- 1. MULTILATERALISM VS BILATERALISM:** As a UN-based multilateral intergovernmental programme for media development, IPDC operates in the name of the international community rather than any single country or source of funds. This is a neutral route to achieve results, and it reflects a broad consensual approach to development based on international standards for free, pluralistic and independent media. The advantages that arise are trust by, and access to, actors – assets which other media development actors may lack, especially in contested contexts.
- 2. CREDIBILITY/UNESCO LABEL:** IPDC, and UNESCO more broadly, enjoy a “brand” and a unique status in supporting projects that can promote common visions within a country on issues such as safety, journalism education or community media. Other media development actors seldom have the same credible standing or global reputation with stakeholders, or the international spread of activities, that IPDC does. Where a grant is agreed, the UNESCO/IPDC name is also of great value for the project submitters in terms of leverage for further resource mobilization from other donors.
- 3. EMPOWERING OTHERS:** IPDC empowers local organizations – IPDC does not implement but rather empowers local organizations to support implementation themselves. Thus IPDC helps to complement the broader programmatic approach of UNESCO, as agreed by the Member States, with direct bottom-up initiatives, which are then locally owned. Overall, this provides a “sweet spot” that represents a common paradigm of priorities between two directions of media development energy – from UNESCO and from grassroots interests.

- 4. AN OUTSTANDING, UNIQUE KNOWLEDGE-BASE** - UNESCO's knowledge base, built on 70 years of experience in the field of education, culture, science and communication, nourishes IPDC on a permanent basis. IPDC itself has more than 30 years of lessons learnt. In this context, the Programme has a Special Initiative to foster knowledge-driven media development, which in turn translates into an informed, strategic and learning practice of support for particular dimensions of media development. This draws from project experience, as in the annual analysis of Implementation Reports and the selected in-depth evaluations that take place. It is also fed by the results of the comprehensive assessments of national media landscapes that are being carried out by UNESCO in a growing number of countries using the IPDC-endorsed Media Development Indicators, and the related sub-indicators. The relevance of the knowledge base can be seen in examples, such UNESCO's recognition of the importance of media pluralism which translates into practical support of community radio through IPDC; and recognition of editorial independence that is reflected in IPDC support for self-regulation, journalism education and expert journalism in emerging areas such as climate change.
- 5. FROM NORMATIVE WORK TO PROJECT DELIVERY: IPDC INTERVENES AT ALL LEVELS** - IPDC conducts holistic work in all aspects of media development: research, normative work, monitoring, standard-setting and project implementation. IPDC's intergovernmental Council enables the Programme to have an impact at policy-levels. At the same time, the Programme draws from its practical experience on the ground to develop normative work, such as the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, and such as international standards for various aspects of media development. Not many other actors can span these interconnected levels of activity. IPDC thus provides a platform where grass-root level initiatives around the world can inform both governmental decision-making levels and international thinking on media development, and vice versa.
- 6. COMPETITIVE COST-EFFECTIVENESS:** IPDC is a very cost-effective investment for donors. While 10% goes to UNESCO overall running costs, IPDC does not draw from extrabudgetary grants for projects to cover the costs of staff time or meetings of governing bodies. Outputs are effective: UNESCO/IPDC has honed comprehensive systems whereby project submitters are supported to plan their projects in depth, including for instance gender sensitivity issues, thereby enabling strong implementation. In addition, through its Bureau, IPDC is able to be responsive to changing needs, as shown in the evolution of its priorities in response to new dynamics.
- 7. VALUE-ADDING PARTNERSHIPS:** IPDC, through its innovative work, has developed widespread interest, and multiple partnerships which add value to the totality of its efforts. This interest can be seen by the number of observers participating in meetings of its governing bodies, and in UNESCO's leadership role in the media development sector as regards recent debates around the Sustainable Development Goals. The partnerships can give rise to extrabudgetary support, as seen in the IPDC's 2014 cooperation with the Deutsche Welle Akademie in support of media sustainability indicators.

4. CONCLUSION

Member States, IPDC constituencies and the Secretariat can consider capitalizing more strongly on the special character of the IPDC Programme in order to strategically promote the Programme with potential donors, partners and project beneficiaries.

The conclusions of the Bureau's discussion on this agenda item will be submitted as an information item to the forthcoming meeting of the IPDC Intergovernmental Council.